

Memorandum

DATE: 23 August 1995

TO: Mr. Rosenau

FROM: Dr. Tim Castle

RE: Interview with Roger D. Huffman,
REFNO 2052

CC: Mr. Gray, Ms. Travis, LtCol Schiff

Received DPMO
on 24 Aug 95.
copy to: RA-CO
EA-NOK
SS - Task E.A. PP1
Rosenau

Davis, J.W.
Gish, H.G.
Hall, W.R.
Holland, M.A.

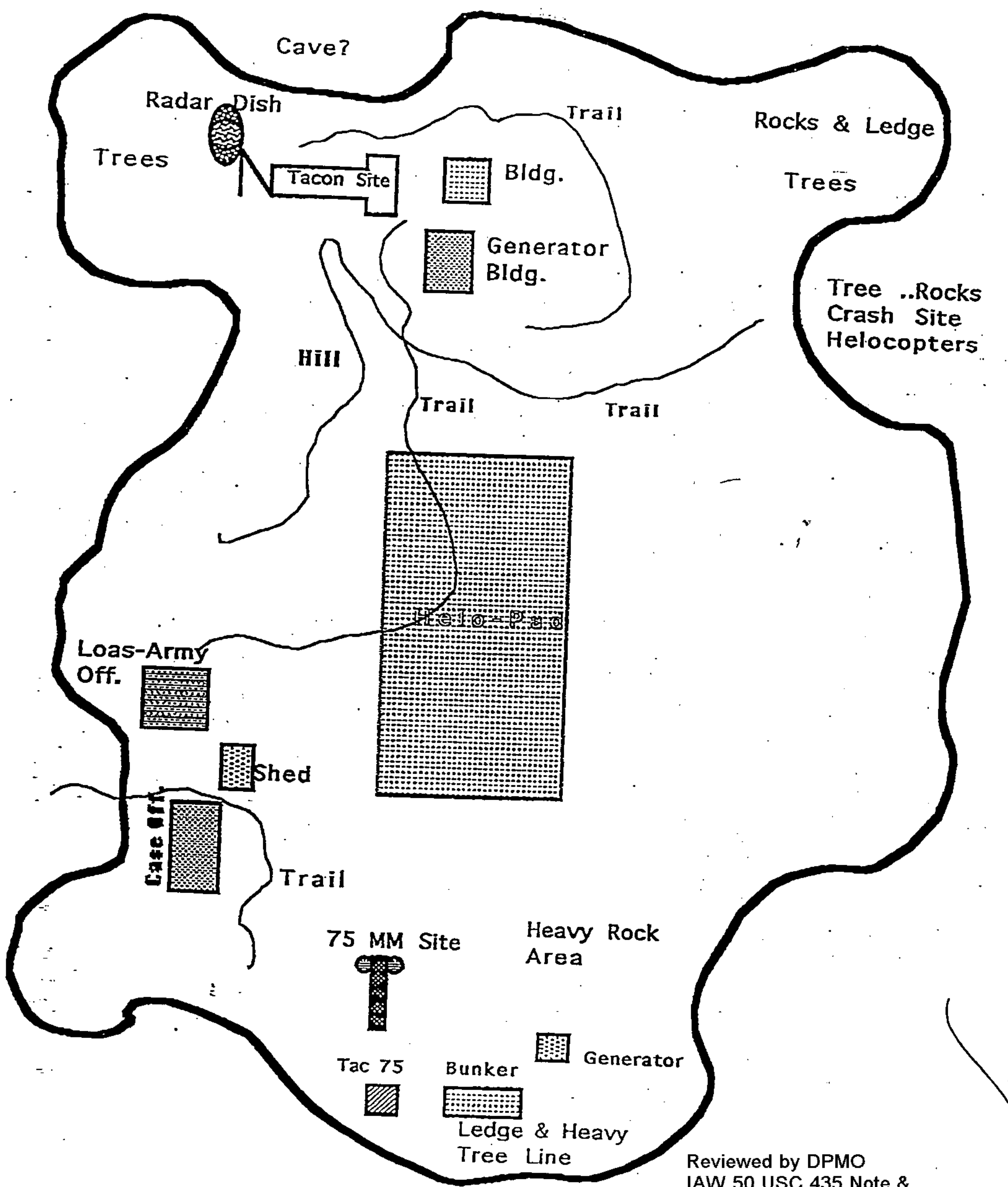
Shannon, P.L.
Springstead, D.K.

1. Following several weeks of coordination between this analyst and Capt Ed Reynolds, Silver City, New Mexico, police department, on 22 August 1995, [redacted] was telephonically interviewed. At the suggestion of Capt Reynolds, [redacted] agreed to accept the call at Capt Reynolds office. The interview, lasting some ninety minutes, was conducted in a very cordial, but straightforward atmosphere.

2. SUMMARY: This analyst is now certain that [redacted] was stationed as a USAF forward air guide at Phu Pha Thi (Lima Site 85), REFNO 2052, and was present during the 10-11 March 1968 North Vietnamese assault on the TSO-81/TACAN complex. While it is not possible to determine the veracity of all of [redacted] statements, he was able to clearly articulate his physical movements during the attack, which are consistent with other verified reporting, and clarified a number of passages attributed to him in a recently released book on Laos. Once the attack began [redacted] reported to his bunker/radio position close by the helipad. While Lao and/or Thai troops near his position did fire at what the Thai and/or Lao believed were enemy forces moving across the helipad, [redacted] never saw any enemy and in the morning light there were no enemy bodies. [redacted] was adamant in saying that during the attack he never saw any Americans in the vicinity of position and believes it is possible that in the confusion the Thai and/or Lao were firing at other friendlies or phantoms. He was evacuated from the helipad by a "small helicopter" and debriefed in Vientiane. [redacted] has agreed to draw a sketch map of his movements the night and morning of the attack and stated that he would provide this

office with a 1968-era photograph of himself. While not excited at the prospect of further contact with this office, [REDACTED] did agree to be re-contacted if necessary and provided a pager number. He did not wish to be contacted at his place of employment or at his residence.

(b)(6)



Reviewed by DPMO
IAW 50 USC 435 Note &
DOD 5400.7-R Date 07-Dec-2007
Initialed By: S. F.

Institute for Scientific Information



3501 Market Street ■ Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104 USA ■ (215) 386 0100 ■ Telex (34-5305) ■ Fax (215) 386-0352

ISI FACSIMILE MESSAGE

Date: 12 Oct 94No. of pages
(including cover sheet) 6

Transmitting to:

Attention:

Address:

Lt. Col. Jeanne SchiffDPMO

DASD/DPMO	
DATE RCD:	<u>12 OCT</u>
ACTION OFFICER:	<u>Am</u>
DISTR	<u>ACT/INT</u>
DIRECTOR	
DEPUTY DIR	
(SUPT)	
(POL/PLN)	
(RES/ANAL)	
(EXT REL)	
(REF/DOC)	
<u>RA-CD</u>	
<u>LT COL. SCHIFF</u>	

Telefax No:

1-703-908-2763

If you do not receive all of the pages, or if any part of the message is illegible please telefax me immediately.

Sender:

Jay Verth

Department:

1-800-523-1850Ext No.: 1338

Transmitting from: Telefax No. (215) 387-1125

Comments: Col.

As promised, here is the statement from the Ground FAC at Lima Site 85. Please call me so I know you got this.

Take care,

If this box is checked [] this message is urgent - please deliver to recipient immediately upon receipt.

If this box is checked [] this message is confidential.

Reviewed by DPMO
IAW 50 USC 435 Note &
DOD 5400.7-R Date 07-Dec-2007
Initialed By: S. F.

The following statement was taken on November 10, 1986 from a former Forward Air Controller (FAC), who was stationed near Lima Site 85 during the March 10-11, 1968 incident. He wishes to remain anonymous.

I served in the United States Air Force as a Forward Air Controller/ground Combat Controller from 1 Aug. 1965 until 1 Aug. 1969. I was assigned to an Air Commando Squadron, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand from December 1967 until March 1968. I had detached duty at Long Tieng, Laos. We were the few Air Force men in uniform in Laos. We were actually controlled by the Air Attache's office in at the American Embassy, Vientiane, Laos. Our duty assignments in Laos was directed by the Air Attache each week. I performed FAC duty at a number of different locations throughout Laos from Dec 67 to Mar 68.

On or about 1 March 1968, I was told to prepare for a long duration posting at a remote site in Northern Laos. Normally our posting are for not more than 36 hours. They informed me this posting would be for at least 72 hours. I gathered my gear and was flown from Long Tieng to Lima Site 201. We had helicopter problems (HH-53C) and so we had to remain at site 201 for one night. The next morning we flew back to Long Tieng (Lima Site 20A). I was told my posting to the forward site, which they identified as Lima Site 85, was postponed. But two days later, they told me the posting to site 85 was back on. I think this was on the 5th of March. I was briefed before I was posted to the site. The briefing consisted of the following: Lima Site 85 was a Top Secret TACAN/RADAR site operated by 16 civilians. I was not to have any contact with site personnel. I was given three radio frequencies for the site to be utilized only under emergency orders from my FAC air controller. I was also given a radio frequency of CAS personnel that I could routinely use. I was told the area around site 85 was under attack and that I was needed to direct air strikes, low level, at the site. I was given a map, where friendly forces were plotted. I carried in my regular gear, which consisted of a TAC Air radio, an emergency radio (FM), a GAU rifle, a survival kit, which included a .38 Cal. revolver, survival knife, rations for 5 days, flares, grenades (M26) and an assortment of other items. I was flown to Lima Site 85 early in the morning by an HH-53C helicopter flown by an Air Force crew. I landed at a helicopter strip below the site. Upon my arrival, I was met by a CAS employee. I remember his name was [redacted]. He told me I would have to hike up to my posting location, which was approximately one-half mile up the mountain and around the North-ern side. Since I had a lot of gear with me (backpack, two equipment bags), [redacted] assigned a Hmong to assist me. We traveled up the mountain carefully avoiding the site. Once I found my posting location, which was about 300 yds from the site, I set up camp. It took me about three hours to set my equipment up. I was on high ground just about 10 yds from the cliff edge. The cliff dropped about 2000 feet so I had to be careful. I had an escape route to my North. The site was to the South of me. After I set up my equipment, I contacted Long Tieng by way of my TAC radio. They sent me an aircraft mission schedule by code. The first day was pretty idle. No air strike missions were flown that day. The

next day, 1. It was the 6th, about 1. Lessons were given that day. Near the end of that day, one individual from site 85 walked down to my position and spoke with me. He said his team was aware of the location I was at and wondered if I had enough food and water. I told him I had the necessary items but thanked him. I would describe him as being about 30 years old, he wore wire rim glasses. That is about all I remember of him. He was the only individual from the site I had personal contact with. From that day until March 11, I directed a lot of air strikes each day. I don't recall the exact number but I worked between 12 and 16 hours per day. At night, I set up my own little perimeter. I placed trip-flares at strategic locations around my perimeter. These are bright flares and goes off if activated. I had constant radio communications with my Air controllers in the air. They kept me briefed regarding the enemy situation around site 85. On the 9th, I requested new radio batteries. An Air America helicopter hovered above my location and dropped me three new radio batteries. Along with the batteries, they dropped me some food (C-rations), and a letter from home. I can remember being so happy to have something to read, especially a letter from home. The next morning, 10th March, was quite some morning. Enemy forces had moved mortars near the base of the mountain. They also moved heavy artillery near the bottom of the mountain. Things started to get real scary. The enemy bombarded the mountain with artillery throughout the day. I directed over 20 sorties against these artillery positions. Evening came, but the mortaring and artillery attacks continued. A C-130 blindcat arrived on station and directed concentrated mini-gun fire to the mortar launch locations. All the mortars were landing near the site. I was not in danger except for one stray mortar round which landed above my location damaging one of my radios. Around midnight or during the early morning hours of 11 March, the situation started to deteriorate. Among positions at the base of the mountain were overrun. I monitored different radio frequencies during this time period. I overheard site 85 personnel speaking with the command post (location near helicopter landing area) where (CA3) personnel were located. Site 85 personnel kept asking for conditions. () would relate what he knew about enemy positions. () informed the site personnel that they would be evacuated at first light. () instructed them to proceed down the path towards the helicopter landing pad and await helicopters. () told them to destroy what ever equipment they could. During this conversation, I heard () address the radio operator at the site as "Colonel". This was when I realized Air Force personnel were at the site. A short time later, () called me up on the radio and asked me whether I would be evacuated by "AF" copters of "AA" copters (meaning Air America). I told him I didn't know. No one had informed me of the evacuation. I assumed I would have to stay until ordered to leave. A short time later, a rocket struck a building at site 85. I remember seeing a large flash and heard the explosion. I thought that someone must have been wounded or killed. But a short time later, I heard the radio operator at the site inform () that the rocket had damaged the living area but no one was hurt. There were not further radio transmission from the site until sometime later. About 0400hrs., I heard a lot of

(b)(3)

(b)(3)

small arms fire coming from site 85. I couldn't figure out what had happened. I couldn't figure out how enemy forces could have assaulted the site. My first question was, where did they come from? Because of the darkness, I couldn't see anything other than gun flashes. I switched to the emergency radio frequency given to me for site 85 and tried to raise them. I finally got someone who reported the site was being attacked. This individual was very excited and was near panic. He stated that one man was wounded and another was dead. I asked this individual whether the enemy had totally taken over the crest of the mountain. He wouldn't answer me. All he kept saying was "we need help, we need help". I made my way about 100 yards closer to the site. I couldn't be of much assistance since I was only one person, but I figure I had more combat training than the individuals at the site. I thought I could make my way over and help. But as I moved closer to the site, the small arms fire intensified. None of the fire was directed at me, but the fire was close to me. I kept trying to contact [redacted] but I couldn't get him on the radio. Then I tried calling the site. Once, one person said "are you air rescue". I answer no that I was a FAC. Apparently thinking I was in the air, this person asked for air strikes on the site. About this time, I was contacted on IAC radio by a cortie of A-1Es. They had arrived to assist. I directed them to the site and asked them for air burst bombs directly over the site. I figure if anyone was alive at the site, they would have taken cover. The A-1Es told me the strikes were not feasible on the site because they observed friendlies moving around at the site. Besides, they informed me they still had radio contact with personnel at the site. This was just at day light. I slowly moved my way around the top of the mountain to the helicopter landing pad. I passed near a Hmong checkpoint and observed the Hmong in a fire fight with some enemy. This was the first (and I should say only) time I actually saw the enemy. They were in uniform, probably North Vietnamese, and were standing, firing at the Hmong bunker. I started firing at the NVA and continued to move around the mountain. I must admit, my intentions were to get to the landing pad so I could also be evacuated. I finally made my way to the landing pad but observed about a hundred Hmong and their families awaiting to be evacuated. One HH-53 had landed but was quickly inundated with Hmong. [redacted] and [redacted] were adjacent to the helicopter trying to get the Hmong off. I decided that the helicopter pad was not the best place to be evacuated. There were too many friendly forces there and I was afraid the enemy would observe this and fire a rocket into the crowd. I turned around and proceeded back to my original location. This time I moved closer to site 85. I observed many enemy soldiers dead near the base of the road leading to the helicopter pad. I did not observe any Americans. I walked along a very steep slope but made it to my original location. There, I re-loaded my rifle and gathered up some of my equipment. I made radio contact with a FAC aircraft and informed them that I needed to be rescued. They informed me that I would be rescued as soon as the site was evacuated. I observed one Air America helicopter hover above the site, near the cliff and rescue about five or six people. Sometime after this, I observed three people running down the path towards my location. At first, I

thought these individuals were enemy. But I couldn't understand why they were running. It was apparent the enemy had control of the site. The three individuals, who I could not identify because of the distance they were away from me, veered off into the brush. That was the last time I saw these individuals. If they would have continued their course, they could have made it down the mountain. However, they were not running toward the path leading down to the helicopter pad. They were running in the opposite direction. I awaited at my location for several more hours, hoping for a rescue. One helicopter returned but concentrated its efforts at the site. I contacted the helicopter by radio and asked for a pick up. They informed me that one more individual was on the site and needed to be evacuated. This HH-53 hovered and extracted one individual. The helicopter then departed the site. I felt really alone. Air strikes followed and I did my job in directing them. But I felt sad and scared. Even though I was combat trained I was still only 21 years old. I thought they forgot me. I kept asking attacking aircraft for assistance in getting a rescue chopper in to get me out. The aircraft assured me I would be rescued. Several hours later, all aircraft departed the area. The enemy had taken control of the site but most were killed when our aircraft bombed the site. I decided to leave my location and try to make it down the mountain. Instead of leaving the site in direction of the helicopter path, I decided to go in the opposite direction. I made it down the mountain and was near a village when I observed a squad of enemy soldiers. I hid in some bushes and only got out when the enemy had passed. I got out my rescue radio and called for help. About one hour later, (about six hours after the site had been evacuated) two Air America helicopters and one HH-53 returned for me. I had to make it to a clearing about 200 yards from my location in order to be picked up. As I was approaching the clearing, an enemy squad crossed my path. I was stunned. I immediately started firing at them. One of the Air America helicopters made a low pass and started firing at the enemy. I ran toward the clearing but while doing so I felt a sharp pain in my left leg. It felt like my leg was on fire. I look down and saw blood coming from a wound in my left leg just above my knee. I fell to the ground and started thinking that this was it for me. But the HH-53 lowered a para-rescue (PJ) man to the ground and hoisted me up to the aircraft. During this rescue, the PJ was shot in the arm. We took off and flew to LS 201. Once at LS 201, a CAS medic bandaged my leg and placed me in an Air America helicopter which flew me to Udorn AB, Thailand. I received emergency medical care at Udorn and then flown to Korat AB, Thailand to a USAF hospital. Once at the hospital, I was debriefed by CAS and USAF officials. I gave the USAF officials (intelligence personnel) a statement and also gave the CAS officials a statement. They asked me if I had seen any Americans alive around the site. I told them no. But I did tell them about the three people I saw running from the site in the early morning hours. I couldn't describe them but I thought they were friendly. I spent two weeks in the hospital and was later flown back to Nakhon Phanom AB, Thailand. I was returned to duty but I only worked in the office, scheduling other missions. About two weeks later, I was transferred back to the US for reassignment.

I do know the survivors of site 85 was in a ward next to me at Korat. I never saw them or spoke to them but one of the corpsman told me that one individual had died upon arrival at Udorn. The other four were wounded but would survive.

That is about all I can remember. I have told this story several times before. The story about my rescue was published in a USAF History of Southeast Asia book. It described the rescue but only said the location was a remote forwarding operating site in Southeast Asia. It did not mention Laos or site 85.

I hope this helps you

Copy of something sent to Jay - came originally
from

(b)(6)

Story - a "source" of hers took statement from
the FAC - she doesn't know his name.

~~Additional~~ Additional info strongly suggests this
account is not firsthand but was written by
an individual who was trying to make a
movie of the incident.